COUNCIL OF
ONTARIO UNIVERSITIES

CONSEIL DES
UNIVERSITÉS DE L'ONTARIO

COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

June 2009

This newsletter provides quick updates on issues of interest to members and affiliates of the Council of Ontario Universities (COU). This issue covers spring 2009.

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Capital boost for Ontario universities

Ontario universities received a big boost with an infusion of capital investments totalling nearly $1.1 billion from the federal and provincial governments in the last week of May to build new facilities and renovate existing ones.

The investments are part of the Government of Canada and Ontario's economic stimulus packages, designed to support projects that will provide Ontario university students and faculty with a high-quality teaching and research environment. This in turn, will foster the talent and innovation that are needed to contribute and compete in the future.

Investment in these projects will also give an immediate boost to the local economies of the many communities in which Ontario universities operate, creating jobs for engineers, architects, trades people and technicians, among many others. The projects will also support a greener economy by using more energy-efficient systems and fostering sustainability.

Long term operating plan is key focus

COU has begun work on shaping policy options for the development of a new, long-term plan that will be the successor to the current Reaching Higher plan. The Ontario university sector is seeking a five-year, sustainable funding plan that will enable its institutions to continue providing students with a first-class education.

David Trick, who has served as the Assistant Deputy Minister of the Postsecondary Education Division of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, has been retained to consult with Executive Heads of Ontario's universities and gather information as a foundation upon which to develop policy options on key issues.

The Ontario government has also set up a secretariat charged with developing a policy framework for the new plan, with Leah Myers at the helm. Ms. Myers, who recently served as President of Durham College, led the secretariat that supported the comprehensive Postsecondary Review conducted by former Premier Bob Rae.

Recommendations cited in the Rae review's final report formed the basis of the government's Reaching Higher plan, which committed an historic $6.2 billion to postsecondary education from 2005 to 2010.

In addition, COU has retained the market research firm Strategic Counsel to examine public perceptions of Ontario universities, including the importance of universities to Ontario's economic prosperity and awareness of the financial challenges facing our universities.

New senior director on board at COU

On May 25, 2009, the COU Secretariat welcomed a new member to its senior management team, Dr. Peter Gooch, as Senior Director, Policy and Analysis.

Dr. Gooch brings to the position a wealth of policy experience in the Ontario public sector. Most recently, he was Director of Strategy, Policy and Planning for the Toronto District School Board. Before that, he served as Director of the Education Finance Branch in the Ministry of Education, where he led the development of proposals for funding changes for elementary and secondary education to meet the province's objectives and the priorities of school boards.

At the Ministry of Community and Social Services, Dr. Gooch led a team of analysts providing business and financial advice to program policy areas. He also worked at the Management Board Secretariat and briefly for the ministries of Housing, and Health and Long-Term Care.

Dr. Gooch received his BA, MA and PhD from the University of Toronto. In addition, he has completed executive and professional programs at the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles and the Richard Ivey School of Business at the University of Western Ontario.

Symposium spotlights work of Ontario's public policy researchers

The province's latest research stars – eight Ontario Research Chairs in Public Policy – will be participating in a symposium that will examine public policy priorities under the broad themes of health, education and economic prosperity. The researchers were selected as part of the $25 million Ontario Research Chairs in Public Policy program, which is funded by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and administered by COU.

The symposium, scheduled for October 2, 2009, will enable the Chairs and colleagues from academe and policy to showcase the work made possible by the endowment, thus spotlighting the contributions that Ontario universities make to the development of public policy in the province.

The University of Toronto's School of Public Policy and Governance will host the symposium, and representatives from the government, university and business communities will be invited to attend.

Former UBC President to receive David C. Smith Award

Research champion and innovative university leader Martha Piper has been selected the 2009 winner of the prestigious David C. Smith Award for Significant Contribution to Scholarship and Policy.

A seasoned and respected administrator, Dr. Piper led the University of British Columbia (UBC) in Vancouver for 9 years, during which she strengthened UBC's focus on students and their involvement at all levels, ensured academic excellence and effective management, fostered strong links between the university and the community as well as innovative partnerships with business, and advanced research initiatives. She was also a central force in forging a bold leap forward for research support by the federal government, including her integral role in the development of the Canada Foundation for Innovation, the Canada Research Chairs and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

Prior to UBC, Dr. Piper was Vice-President (Research) at the University of Alberta. She has served on the National Advisory Board on Science and Technology, the British Columbia Progress Board, which measures the province's social and economic competitiveness, and the boards of the Advisory Council on Science and Technology, the Pierre Elliot Trudeau Foundation, and the National University of Singapore Council. In 2005, she was appointed a Public Governor of the Board for the Canadian Academies of Science and in 2007 was named a Fellow of the Royal Society.

Dr. Piper, who is an Officer of the Order of Canada and a recipient of the Order of British Columbia, will be presented with the David C. Smith Award at a dinner ceremony on October 15, 2009 in Toronto. She joins an illustrious group of winners, including former Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, former Premier Bob Rae, former Ontario university presidents Rob Prichard and James Downey, former York University Dean of Education Paul Axelrod, and Professor Emeritus David Cameron.

Ontario universities continue work on ensuring sustainable pension plans

Exploring options to enhance the long-term sustainability of university pension plans is the focus of the Working Group on University Pension Plans, which was created in response to unaffordable funding requirements that harm the financial health of universities.

The Working Group will undertake a comprehensive review of experiences of other Canadian jurisdictions and research available alternatives. Once the research is complete, Ontario universities will share the findings with stakeholders to develop sustainable solutions, mindful that all interests are protected. It is expected that the Working Group will submit its final report to Executive Heads by the end of 2009.

Membership of the Working Group consists of one executive head, several university vice-presidents of finance and COU's pension consultant. Representatives from the ministries of Finance and Training, Colleges and Universities will act as observers.

Ryerson President to serve as Chair of Council

Sheldon Levy is driven by a pair of principles: put people first, and take bold action. As he assumes his two-year leadership role as Chair of Council on July 1, 2009, he believes Ontario universities are catalysts for progress, by partnering the ingenuity and energy of students and scholars with the aspirations of local and global communities.

Recently reappointed for his second five-year term as President of Ryerson, Prof. Levy has been an advocate and visionary leader within the Ontario postsecondary sector for over 30 years. He has served as Vice-President, Government and Institutional Relations at the University of Toronto, Vice-President, Finance and Strategy at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, Vice-President Institutional Affairs at York University, and President of Sheridan College (now Sheridan College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning).

Prof. Levy received his BSc (Honours, First Class) and MA from York University and an Honorary Doctorate from York University. He serves as Vice-Chair of COU, the Executive Committee and the Board of Directors of the COU Holding Association Inc. He also chairs the Government and Community Relations Committee, co-chairs the College University Consortium Council, and sits on the Standing Committees on Relationships with Other Postsecondary Institutions, the Standing Committee on Nominations and the Working Group on University Capacity. He also serves on the Campaign Cabinet of the United Way of Greater Toronto as Chair of the Universities and Colleges Sector.

Queen's University welcomes incoming Principal

Noted historian Daniel Robert Woolf will become Queen's University's 20th Principal on September 1, after having begun an academic appointment in Queen's Department of History on July 1, 2009. Dr. Woolf was until recently the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Professor in the Department of History and Classics at the University of Alberta in Edmonton.

Born in London, England but raised in Winnipeg, Dr. Woolf earned his BA (Honours, First Class) at Queen's and his DPhil in modern history at Oxford University. Having started his academic career at Queen's, he explains that assuming the stewardship of the university feels as if he's returning to his "intellectual home." He said, "I am thrilled to be returning to Queen's and to Kingston. I have a firm knowledge of Queen's and its traditions and look forward to helping the university move forward in these challenging times."

After his teaching stint at Queen's, Dr. Woolf taught at Bishop's University in Lennoxville, Quebec, and then at Dalhousie University in Halifax, where he became a full professor and served as Associate Dean and later Acting Dean of Graduate Studies. In 1999, he joined McMaster University as Dean of the Faculty of Humanities before moving to the University of Alberta in 2002.

Dr. Woolf will succeed Principal Tom Williams who has led Queen's since May 2008 on an interim basis. Dr. Williams has had a distinguished career in higher education and has held many leadership positions at Queen's. He arrived at the university in 1977 to assume the position of Dean, Faculty of Education and has also served as Vice-Principal (Operations and University Finance), Vice-Principal (Institutional Relations) and Acting Director of the School of Public Policy.

A fond farewell to departing members of Council

At the year-end Council dinner held at York on April 2, 2009, Council acknowledged the commitment and work of departing Council members:

EXECUTIVE HEADS:
- Mr. Robert Bourgeois, Laurentian
- Dr. Dennis Mock, Nipissing
- Dr. Tom Williams, Queen's
- Prof. Bonnie Patterson, Trent
- Dr. Paul Davenport, Western

ACADEMIC COLLEAGUES:
- Antoni Lewkowicz, Ottawa
- Dan Lang, Toronto
- Alex Latta, Wilfrid Laurier
- Philippe Constantineau, RMC

Council also bid a fond farewell to Claire Morris, who is completing her five-year term as President of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada.

Highlights from the 2009 Ontario Budget

The 2009 budget investments in postsecondary operating, infrastructure and research funding were a welcome relief to Ontario universities, particularly given the financial situation of the province.

In its March announcement, the government committed $150 million in "immediate, one-time support" for universities and colleges for much-needed operating support, in addition to the $199 million scheduled annual increase in Reaching Higher for 2009-10. It also committed $780 million to match Ontario's share of the federal government's funding for postsecondary infrastructure *(see lead story for details)*. Subsequent to the March announcement, Ontario increased its funding commitment to $1.1 billion for postsecondary infrastructure.

The budget also included a number of significant research investments including $300 million over six years for research infrastructure that will leverage Ontario's portion of federal awards from the Canada Foundation for Innovation, and an additional $100 million for biomedical research focused on genomics, to be delivered through the Ontario Research Fund. Ontario is already the 4th largest biomedical cluster in North America and the largest in Canada.

Other welcome initiatives for universities are $35 million with associated operating funding to support 100 additional medical spaces, $10 million to expand graduate fellowships, and $50 million for proposed enhancements to the Cooperative Educational Tax Credits.

Advancing accessibility initiatives on campus

The Reference Group on Accessibility for People with Disabilities continues to support its university partners in complying with the Customer Service Standard of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA), as well as providing advice to government regarding the development of the four other standards: transportation, information and communications, built environment and employment.

The Reference Group, which was set up by COU after Ontario's first accessibility standard (customer service) became law in 2008, helps to ensure that staff, volunteers, contractors and other individuals who interact with the public or other third parties on behalf of Ontario universities are adequately trained on delivering accessible customer service.

One of the group's initiatives, a partnership with Queen's University and the Ministry of Community and Social Services' Accessibility Directorate, is the development of a web-based tool to train university personnel on accessible customer service that should be available by October 2009. Another initiative is the pooling of common resources and training between Ontario universities to ensure consistent and effective implementation of the standards.

The Reference Group is composed of senior university administrators, COU representatives of the five AODA standards development committees and noted experts in the field.

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New quality assurance system underway

Draft guidelines for approval of new programs, the cyclical reviews of existing undergraduate and graduate programs, and the audit of universities' review processes will be ready for distribution in the coming weeks to all Ontario universities for review and feedback, with the target date for full implementation of the new quality assurance framework slated for September 2010.

The guidelines have been crafted by the Quality Assurance Transition/Implementation Task Force, which was created in May 2008 to develop new quality assurance processes for undergraduate and graduate programs offered by Ontario's universities, in response to recommendations made in Richard Van Loon's 2007 report. The Task Force reports to OCAV and is working with OCAV members to change and refine the guidelines.

In addition to writing the guidelines, the Task Force is keeping key provincial bodies apprised of the new directions for Quality Assurance, including the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario and the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board.

The mission and mandate of the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance which will be the new oversight body for these quality assurance processes, are also being drafted, and an executive director of quality assurance is in the process of being hired.

Nursing stars receive awards

Nine provincial awards of excellence were presented to nursing faculty, students, staff and health program partners by the Council of Ontario University Programs in Nursing (COUPN) on April 30, 2009. The awards, created in 2008, focus on four areas: excellence in teaching, innovation in research, student excellence and partnership support.

"Nursing programs at Ontario universities are committed to ensuring not only excellence in our teaching to prepare our students to provide the best health care for Ontarians, but also innovation in our research to advance the health care system as a whole in our province," says Dr. Kileen Tucker Scott, Chair of COUPN and Director of Ryerson University's Daphne Cockwell School of Nursing, who was also an award winner.

This year's recipients of awards are:

- Dr. Sue Coffey, York University, and Dr. Tucker Scott – Excellence in Teaching Award
- University of Western Ontario's Arthur Labatt Family School of Nursing – Teaching Innovation Award
- Middlesex-London Health Unit – Agency Recognition Award
- Margaret Duff, University Health Network – Award for Strategic Contribution to Nursing Education
- Dr. Patrick O'Byrne, University of Ottawa – Doctoral Dissertation Award
- Jason McCready, University of Western Ontario – Master's Student Award of Excellence
- Hilary Hall, University of Toronto – Award for Excellence in Professional Nursing Practice at the Undergraduate Student Level
- Dr. Michael McGillion, University of Toronto – New Tenure Stream Faculty Contribution Award
- Deborah Walker, Hamilton Health Sciences – Preceptor Recognition Award